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Told in a Little Boy's Pocket

SARA BEAUMONT KENNEDY

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TOLD IN A LITTLE BOY'S POCKET

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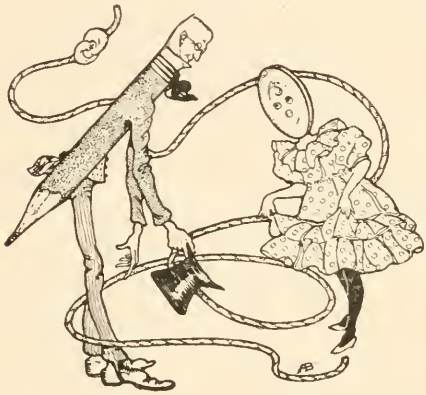
"My Master Was Playing Better Than Usually."

(page 27)

TOLD IN A LITTLE BOY'S POCKET

BY

SARA BEAUMONT KENNEDY



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To My Nephew

JUNIUS DEVEREUX HOBSON

The Last of Our "Little Men"

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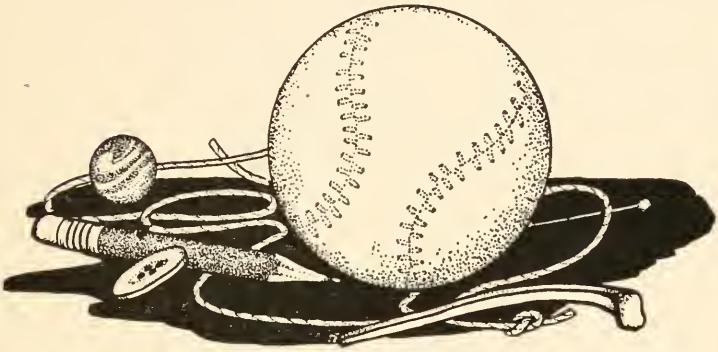
Told in a Little Boy's Pocket



THEY had traveled together all day, around the yard, up the ladder to the hay loft, down the dusty road, and across the orchard to the banks of the big, clear brook. Of course there had been plenty of stops, especially in the orchard and by the raspberry vines, for the six travelers were a nail, a lead pencil, a string, a button, a marble and a pin; and they were traveling in a Little Boy's jacket pocket. None of them were doing any

work except the pin; that was holding together the edges of a hole in the side of the pocket. The Little Boy had stuck it there in the early morning.

"I am sure, Miss Pin, you are very kind to keep that place so tightly shut. If it were not for you I'd be slipping through and getting lost," said the Nail.

"Pray, don't speak that word, Mr. Nail," answered Miss Pin quickly. "I've been lost so often that the very sound of the word makes me shudder. People never seem to think they must take care of a pin."

"Nor of a nail. People hunt for lost marbles and tops and balls, but pins and nails do not seem to count; that is why I think it kind of you to close up that ugly hole."

"Yes," sighed the little pearl Button, "I agree with Mr. Nail; it is very good of you. I should not like to be dropped here in the dust; when one has been born in the sea one never likes the dust; it is so different, you know."

Miss Pin turned her round head toward the last speaker. "The sea—you were born in the sea? How interesting! I wish you would tell us about it. I don't think that even Professor Pencil knows much of the sea."

"I sailed across it from the land where I was manufactured," replied the Lead Pencil loftily.

"But you don't know as much about it as Miss Button does," said the Pin.

"You may be right; but I have seen it on the Little Boy's maps. I can put my point instantly on the water of a geography map. It's always a different color from the land. But little Button's description may be interesting."

"I think Miss Pin's suggestion is a very nice one," put in Mr. Nail. "We are all here for the day; for the Little Boy is going to fish in the brook and will be very quiet; let us amuse ourselves by telling, in turn, the stories of our lives."

They all agreed quite eagerly, and the Button was just about to begin her story when the

flap of the pocket was lifted and the Little Boy's fingers shoved an old baseball through the opening.

"Oh, it's you, is it, Captain Ball? Come in," said Mr. Nail hospitably.

"I am afraid I'll crowd you badly," said the Ball; "but you know how the Little Boy is about his pocket—he never thinks it is full."

"Oh, we can make room for you," said Professor Pencil, who was so well educated that he never forgot to be polite. "We are quite used to being crowded. The only company we ever objected to was the toad-frog the Little Boy crammed in on us last week."

"What on earth did he want with a toad-frog?" asked the Ball.

"He intended to put it in a little girl's desk at school and hear her squeal—for although our Little Boy is honest, never cheats at play or at work, he is full of mischief."

"Did the frog scare the girl?"

"W-e-ll," answered the Professor slowly, "it did not get a chance, for somehow here in

this close pocket Mr. Nail and I could not help punching it quite often, and the sides of the pocket squeezed it, so that night when his mamma took off the Little Boy's jacket she found the toad with very little breath left."

"Boys certainly have queer tastes," said the Button. "I like girls so much better."

"I don't," replied the Ball quickly. "I just hate to see people afraid of things—worms and frogs and—and—hot balls over the home plate. Give me a boy every time."

"Each one to his own taste; but we were just going to entertain each other with an account of our lives and adventures," said Professor Pencil.

"That will be delightful," said the Ball.

"Miss Button has consented to speak first," said the Professor. "She will tell us something of her adventures among the scale-bearing, the conchifera, the crustacea and ceterea of the vasty deep."

The Ball gasped, whispering to Mr. Nail:

"Gracious, what big words! The Professor must be very wise."

"I should think so," replied the Nail. "He knows bigger words than those, and he works all the Little Boy's examples and writes his compositions."

"You don't say so! I never learned to count further than three, for you know three outs ends the inning."

"Three outs? Really, I don't understand you," said the Nail.

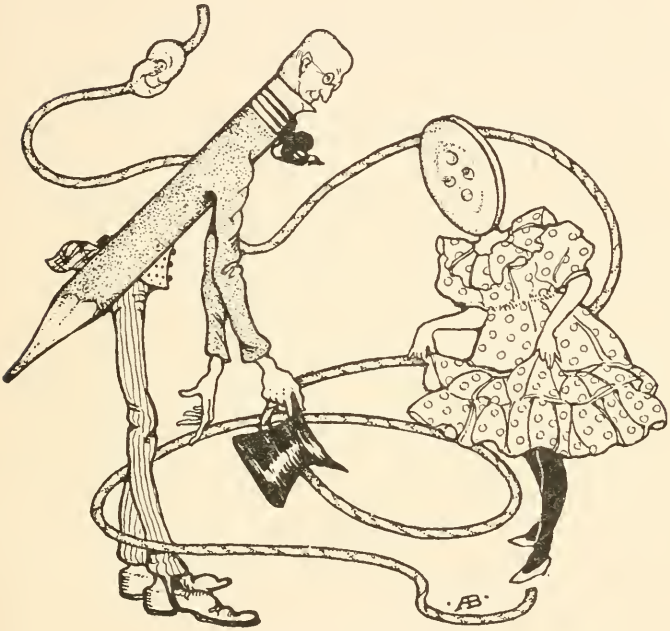
"Three outs means three players have been put out of the game by bad plays. I suppose you don't play baseball?"

"I should think not," replied the Nail. "Do I look as if I could catch a ball?"

"Not much," laughed the Ball. "But—say, what did the Professor mean by those big words?"

"He meant—oh, really, you must not talk any more," replied the Nail, not knowing yet not wishing to show his own ignorance.

But the Professor had heard the whisper, and answered: "The conchifera are the head-



THE PROFESSOR INTRODUCES MISS BUTTON

less, legless shell-fish, such as oysters and conches; the crustacea are the shell-fish that

have legs and joints, such as lobsters and crabs; and the ceterea are the whales."

"You are quite right, Professor," said the Button. "I have seen them all."

Captain Ball turned his eyes admiringly toward the Pencil. "My head is ten times as big as yours, Professor, but yours holds ten times as much knowledge. I suppose that is because I do nothing but play, while you study. All I know is home-runs, three-baggers, fouls and flies and such things."

"Well, that is really your business in life, and it is a good thing to know one's business thoroughly, even if it is just a game," replied the Pencil. "But you must keep still now, for Miss Button is going to speak. Just roll over a little so we can all see her—but, dear me, please keep off my toes! Now, Miss Button, we are all ready if you will be so kind as to begin."

"How interesting it is going to be!" cried the Pin excitedly; "just like a vaudeville show. Please everybody keep still so we can all hear."

Miss Button cleared her throat, being a little confused by so many people looking at her, for she was very timid. But just as she uttered the first word there was a great jolt; the

AN EARTHQUAKE

Marble knocked the Nail on the head, the Pencil jabbed the Ball, and the Pin had to take a fresh grip on the edges of the torn pocket.

"Gracious! is it an earthquake, like they had in San Francisco?" gasped the Marble.

"It is very trying on the nerves," sighed the Nail.

But it was not an earthquake; the Little Boy had only jumped over a fence, and soon everything was quiet.

"Now, didn't that jar you?" snickered the String.

But Professor Pencil looked at him reproachfully. "Kindly refrain from using slang, Mr. String. Remember we have ladies present. Now, Miss Button, I think we are quite ready."

Then the Button, in a song-like voice, that had an echo of sea sound in it, began:

Miss Button's Story

"The first thing I can remember is being rocked by the tide waves as they ran leaping toward the shore. I was a beautiful shell, and I lay in a mass of tangled seaweed, and coiled

within me was a young conch. We grew together, the conch and I, a long time, and my colors became brighter and my sides more polished as tide after tide rolled over us. But one day the little conch died, and with nothing to anchor me to one spot, I became a wanderer, a sea tramp, washed hither and thither at the will of the waves and currents. Sometimes great whales passed me by, blowing waterspouts through their noses; and sometimes it was a shark that flapped me with its tail as it darted after its prey. One day I slipped over a ridge of sand and I suppose I must have fallen clear down to the very deepest bottom of the sea, for on the white sand where I found myself there were curious things—the spars and masts of ships that had been wrecked in storms, and casks and boxes innumerable. An old barnacle told me some of these casks had contained the costly wines and the stolen treasure of the pirates who had sailed the ships."

Captain Ball nudged the Professor. "What is a barnacle?"

"A barnacle," the Professor replied, "is a small shell-fish that attaches itself to a rock or the sides of a ship and grows there. Sometimes they get so thick on the hulls of ships they have to be scraped off. But hush; Button is speaking."

"I longed to peep into those casks," continued the Button, "and see what the wicked pirates had stolen, but most of them were closed so I could not see the gold and silver of the treasure. One, however, was broken open, and out of the crack there hung a necklace of fine jewels, the price of which would have been a fortune to the poor fishermen who sailed the crest of the waves, catching what they could for market, and never dreaming of the riches they missed far down below. It was very beautiful down there in the faint gray-green light and with all the marvels of the under-water world: but somehow I did not like it. Nothing happened; it was the same thing over and over again. With myriads of other shells and pebbles I lay there on the floor of the

great ocean and dreamed of the sunlight I had known before that fatal slip over the sand ledge. I gave myself up as a prisoner for life, for many of the shells told me they had been there for uncounted years. So secluded we were that it seemed as if the whole world had forgotten us; I could not catch even so much as one glimpse of sunshine or hear the voices of singing sailors. It was very dreary, and I saw no hope of an end to it. But one day a great devil-fish came slowly swimming over us. I suppose you never saw a devil-fish swim? Human beings do not like it, but really it is a beautiful sight, for all its long tentacles wave so easily and in such graceful curves. Well, it settled down for a few minutes with one of those tentacles holding me in its curve, and somehow I stuck there when the creature began to move, until it had swum upward a good way. Then just as I dropped and thought to fall again to that deep place, a strong current caught me and carried me high up on a big breaker, so that I saw again the blue sky and

the golden sun. How beautiful they seemed! Then the wave ran away to the shore, bearing me on its crest, and with a loud roar it tossed me high up on the beach. There I lay, wet and shining, but very proud and happy, for I could see the lovely colors that shone on my sides—the pink and purple that ran softly into the pale greens and pearl whites. Not another shell on all the beach was so handsome. I would have been content to remain there, with the tide to wash me clean every day, and the long sun rays to search out my colors, and the fisher-folk to sing to me as they drifted by or drew their boats out of the water to the beach. It was a quiet, happy, beautiful life.

"But one day a man came with a basket and gathered up all the shells he could find and carried them away to the city, to a place they called the factory. There I was rudely thrust under a sharp machine that cut me up into little circles. Then into another machine I went and was thinned down and trimmed and polished. Next I was tossed into another ma-

chine and 'eyes' were punched through me, and I finally emerged a well-ordered button, ready to take my place on a card and be sold to hold little children's clothes together.

"But I did not know what had become of my brothers and sisters—the other buttons that had been cut from the shell I once was—for there were so many hundreds and thousands of buttons that we all got mixed up and scattered. Indeed, we all looked so much alike that I do not think we would have known each other by sight. Well, at last the card on which I was sewed found itself in a store in a box with many other cards, and every now and then a young woman would lift down the box, and, opening it, show the contents to somebody else, and these people all found us too large or too small until one day the Little Boy's mother came and asked for buttons for a girl's coat; and she chose me and five of my companions, and carried us away. And the next day she sewed us to the prettiest little blue jacket you

ever saw; and the jacket was for a little girl with blue eyes and golden hair——"

"Oh, we know her!" interrupted the String; "she is the Boy's little sister Nell."

LITTLE SISTER NELL

"Yes," answered the Button, "it was Nell; and as you know how sweet she is, you may imagine how proud I was to be on her coat. I was determined to serve her to the best of my power, so I held the coat quite closely about her, for I did not wish her to take cold. We went to school together each morning, and I hung out on the rack with the blue jacket until she was ready to go home. I thought she had the sweetest little hands in the world, but she had a habit of twisting at me which was very

bad for the thread that held me. One by one these threads frayed and broke, and last week I could hold on no longer, for the last thread snapped, and I fell to the ground. It was on the asphalt walk, and at first I thought I was broken, the jolt was so terrible; but I was not even chipped. Nell did not notice my fall and so went dancing into the house, and there I lay on the walk all night. The next morning when the Little Boy came out to run a race with his dog, he saw and picked me up, and of course he put me in his pocket, for that is where a little boy puts everything that is not too big——"

"Unless it is good to eat," interrupted the String, getting a sarcastic kink in itself.

"Oh, he's got a special inside pocket for things of that kind," said the Lead Pencil sagely.

"Of course, Professor Pencil, we know you are highly educated, but really we consider such remarks quite inelegant," observed the

Nail severely. "Pray let Miss Button continue her story."

"Oh, there isn't anything else to tell," replied the Button. "I have been here in this pocket two whole days. When Nell's mamma found I was gone from the blue jacket she was very sorry. She and Nell kept wondering what could have become of me; I could hear them, for the Little Boy was standing right by them, but he never once remembered that he had picked me up—boys are such forgetful, careless creatures! Now my only hope is that dear little Miss Pin will keep that hole together until we are in the nursery; then when I fall out nurse will find me on the floor, and I shall be sewed back to Nell's jacket and be quite happy serving her."

The Button stopped, for she had come to the end of her story, and the rest of the company began to tell her how interesting it had been.

"I don't wonder you want to get back to

Nell; girls are so much nicer to serve than boys," said the Pin.

"That's all you know about it," retorted the Marble disdainfully. "I would not belong to a girl for anything—who ever saw one of them plunk the middle man?"

"Or bat a good ball over the plate?" said Captain Ball.

"Well, girls do other things just as smart and fine," said the String.

Then they all began to dispute, taking one side or the other so vehemently that at last the Nail called on Professor Pencil to give an opinion. The Professor cleared his throat quite pompously:

"We will settle this question for good, and have no more disputes—you are *all* right—girls are better for some things, and boys are better for others."

That settled it, and immediately everybody was satisfied; and then the Nail asked the Marble if he would give his story next; and after much persuasion he began:

The Marble's Story

"I was not born under the sea, but deep down in the bowels of the earth. There it is eternally and terribly silent. I remember very well the first sound I ever heard. Click, click, click! it came, and then presently I began to be shaken. Only once before do I remember to have moved, and that was when the whole earth trembled and shook in a terrible earthquake perhaps several centuries before that clicking sound came. Well, that clicking kept on and on, and each time I shook more and

THE MARBLE

more. Then suddenly there was a great crash, and a big lump of agate, of which I was a part, was split wide open, and my side of it fell at the feet of a man with a lantern on his cap and a big pick in his hand. That lantern shed the first light I ever saw. But by and by I was loaded into a queer 'lift' and drawn up, up, until I was out of the mine under the wide blue heavens. Of course it was all right for me to have been born—or I should rather say crystallized—in the dark and the eternal silence, but after that one glimpse of the outer world nothing could have persuaded me to go back to my old quarters. It is not necessary to tell you how long I lay with other lumps of agate in first one place and then another, or where I traveled—in fact, I don't know, for you see I was very ignorant then and knew nothing of calculating time or of geography——"

"I suppose you know a good deal about such matters now?" said the Lead Pencil ironically.

"Certainly I do," replied the Marble proud-

ly. "For haven't I been to school in the Little Boy's pocket every day for a whole month?"

"That is longer than any of us has been with him," admitted the String. "He generally loses things in less time than that. I have been with him two weeks and in that time he has lost his ball, his knife, a snail-shell, an Indian arrow-head, a screw, and a handful of slate pencils and countless other things. I myself was mislaid for three days, and I suppose I would still be behind the sofa if it had not been for the Little Boy's mother; she found me."

"That seems to be one of the best things about mothers. They find many things that children lose," remarked the Nail. "But pray go on, Marble."

"Well, finally the block of agate of which I was a part was put under some sort of a wheel and cut into strips, and these were polished until they were as smooth as ice, and the colors in them were beautiful—two shades of dark reddish brown with these white wavy lines through them; you can see them on my

side. I had no idea I was so handsome! These strips of agate were cut up into all sorts of things—combs, pins, buttons, sets for rings, little squares that were bound with silver for jewel boxes, knife handles, and many other small objects. Out of the smaller pieces and the left-over scraps men made marbles—oh, so many of us! Under the polishing process we became smooth and brilliantly beautiful. The children call us 'stonies,' and you know how they love us. Why, the Little Boy had rather lose every one of you than to have me slip out of his pocket."

The Marble was so puffed up with pride after this assertion that the String snickered, but the Button and the Lead Pencil were quite indignant.

"Did you ever see such conceit?" cried the Button. "I may not count for much with him, but we all know how he loves Captain Ball."

"Thank you, Button," said Ball, bowing politely. "It hardly seemed necessary for me to contradict Marble, since you all know how

dear to a boy's heart his baseball is. I flatter myself he would have grieved more for me than for any of you."

But Professor Pencil would not agree to that.

"Why, everybody knows that if it was not for me the Little Boy couldn't do his arithmetic and spelling, so of course *I* am the favorite," he said, and took up so much room that the Pin told him she could not keep the hole together if he crowded so. It took the Nail several minutes to quiet them; and then the Marble went on with his story:

"When I had become a marble I was put into a box with many others and sent across Button's ocean to this country of America, though I saw nothing of the crabs and whales, as I traveled in a box. Here I was put in a shop to be sold. It was a big shop full of toys, and at one side a long counter where great bowls of goldfish sat. It was all so pretty and interesting that I was sorry to leave. But one day a big man with whiskers came in and

bought me and carried me to a beautiful house where everything was wreathed with holly and cedar. At each end of the mantelpiece there was hanging a stocking; one was long and black, and into it the big man dropped me. I sank down to the very toe and lay very still while he piled candies and nuts and fire-crackers and loads of things above me. Then he suddenly disappeared; and there we hung while the clock ticked and ticked and the fire burned low. Of course it was not dark like it had been when I lay in the earth, but I did not like it and I wanted to get out. So you may believe I was glad when in the early morning there was a great shout and a little boy in his white 'pi-jimmies' took the stocking down and emptied everything on the rug. He shouted with delight over each article, but when at last I rolled out he fairly danced with pleasure, calling out to his sister: 'It's a stony! it's a stony!' From that time I was my little master's favorite playmate, and I was well content, for although he was a very small boy and

could not shoot very straight, still he was honest in his games, and he took the very best care of me. But one day misfortune befell us. There was a bigger boy next door who did not always play fair."

"We all know him," groaned the String. "It's that red-headed Smith boy; he never plays anything on the square."

"I had seen him fudge more than once," continued the Marble, "and I knew he was a cheat. But my little master did not think of such a thing, and one day when the bigger boy dared him to play for 'keeps,' he said he would; for he was a proud little boy and did not like to take a dare—the other boys might all think he was a coward. Now, I did not want to belong to the bigger boy and be made to cheat and swindle, so when my master put his hand in his pocket to find me, I quickly rolled over to the next corner, and when he sought me there I squeezed through a little hole and hid down in the lining. But it was of no use, for the bigger boy helped him to find and pull me

out. Then they began to play. At first I was very hopeful, for my master was playing better than usual; but presently I saw the other chap's hand begin to creep over the line. Every time it was his turn he got a little nearer the ring, and so shot truer and truer. It was a shame, but my master was too little and too honest to suspect, and of course I could not tell him. Then presently, when he wasn't looking, the other boy made a big 'fudge' and won the game. All the marbles in the ring knew it was a cheat, but what could they do? Boys do not understand the language we marbles speak when we go click-click against each other. My little master was very sad, but he had played for 'keeps,' so he put me in the other boy's hand and then ran quickly home that no one might see he was crying.

"Well, the bigger boy was delighted with me, and showed me to all the other boys, for you remember I have no picked place on my side and came out of the dollar box, not out of the dime one, where the cheap, chipped

marbles are kept. But when the Smith boy put me into his pocket with his other marbles they all began to tell me about him.

" 'Good-morning,' said a pecked-up Glass Marble, so far out of my class that I did not feel like speaking to it, except that I had heard my little master's mamma, who was a grand lady, tell him it was very ungenteel to let other people have better manners than one's self—no matter how common they were. So I answered the salute, but tried to roll away from him into the far corner of the pocket.

" 'Oh, you needn't be so stuck-up,' the Glass Marble said, taking notice; 'you'll soon be as ugly and scratched as the rest of us. Only a week ago I was so clear and smooth that you could see the lovely twist of color in my middle; but this is a bad boy, and he doesn't take care of anything, even his marbles.'

" 'That is true,' said a China Marble with blue and red checks over it; 'you had better be sorry to belong to him, for he will chip and

scratch you; and worse than that, he will make you cheat in the game.'

"'He spoils the reputation of any honest marble,' grumbled a Brown China. 'I feel like a thief every time he plays with me.'

"Of course I felt very bad to be in the possession of such an owner, but I made up my mind that he should not spoil my reputation. So when he began to play again, using me as his 'taw' instead of the Brown China, I set myself to thwart him. As long as he played fair I did my part and spun along in the right line to the middle man. But when I found him fudging, I'd slip out of his fingers too soon, or trip over every bit of gravel or grass in the ring, and so make his cheating of no account. The other marbles soon saw what I was up to, and imitated me as far as they could. Oh, but we had a hard time to keep other boys from losing their marbles to our owner, but we did our best. One day he showed me to our own Little Boy and offered to play for 'keeps' with him. Now, I never saw a boy I liked better

than our Little Boy, and I was sorry to see him fall a victim to this big bully. But I needn't have been so worried, for he knew what he was about. Every time the big one fudged, he called him down, until at last the big fellow struck him. You should have seen our Little Boy then; he was awfully white, but he just peeled off his jacket and went for that other fellow. I don't like a fight, but I was glad of every blow our Boy gave him, for though he was littler, he got him down and thrashed him well. When he got up he said:

" 'I've been watching you for a long time cheating these little fellows, and I've wanted a chance at you. Now, you play fair, or you stop playing with gentlemen. My pa says a boy who will cheat at marbles when he's little will steal when he's big; so now is your time to quit.'

"Then they played a fair game, and our Little Boy won me. Then he made the bigger boy tell where he got me, and the first time he sees my first little master he is going to give

me back to him, because he is sure the big boy got me by cheating. Of course I shall be glad to see my little master, for he is sweet-tempered and honest; but I shall also be very sorry to leave the service of our Little Boy, for besides being honest, he shoots straight and strong—and I do so love to plunk the middle man!"

There was a moment's silence after the Marble had finished; then the String said with a sigh:

"You have taught us a great lesson, Marble; it is better to lose the whole game than to hit the middle man through dishonesty. I wish every little boy felt the truth of that."

"I wish every little boy knew how we marbles hate to be made to fudge," sighed the Stony; and the Ball joined in the wish.

"For," he said, "there are times when a ball-game is not played fair, and balls as well as marbles hate to belong to dishonest owners. It is just as that Brown China Marble said, we are made to feel like thieves when the game is won by cheating."

The Nail was much surprised to hear this, for he thought all people did what was right; but Professor Pencil looked very sad and very wise, as if he could have told some tales himself, but he said nothing. Was he thinking that sometimes children cheat to get the answers to examples? If so, it was enough to make him sad.

"I am very glad," said the Button, "that in my profession there is no reason or necessity for dishonesty. When you are holding a little girl's coat fast you haven't any time to cheat, even if you had the opportunity."

Captain Ball looked at her slyly. "Didn't you ever play hookey from school?—that's one kind of cheating."

Button's two eyes flashed. "I never went to school with any one but Nell, and she is a lady."

"You did not answer the question fairly," said Ball, meaning to tease her. But Miss Pin leaned down from the hole and struck her sharp point in him. "Ouch!" cried Ball.

"That is to remind you that you are to remember not to forget your manners," said Pin.

"How about *your* manners?" snapped Ball, trying to rub his hurt side against Professor Pencil's soft rubber cap. But the Professor objected:

"Really, Captain Ball, I must ask you not to take such liberties with me. I am an eraser, not an osteopath."

At which big word Ball gasped as he had done before at the Professor's language. But little Button whispered that an eraser rubbed out marks, but an osteopath was a doctor that rubbed out pains; and Ball forgot his anger in a new wonder over the Pencil's knowledge. Then the Nail, wishing to reconcile everybody, called on the String to give an account of himself, and this is

The String's Story

"I was not dug out of the ground like Stony here, and I never saw the sea like Button. I

grew on a wide plain under the showers and sunshine of the State of Kentucky. The plant that I then was is called hemp and grows in many countries of the eastern and western continents. Hemp grows something like wheat or oats, and when ripe is cut pretty much as those grains are. Out of the dry hemp leaves the people of India make the terrible hasheesh, an intoxicating tea which is as bad as or worse than whiskey, for the people who drink it become almost insane for the time being, and sometimes do very cruel things while under its influence. It is from the fibers of the stems of the plant that strings are made. These stems are kept moist until they begin to rot; then they are put into a hemp-break and all the strong fiber is combed out of the rotten bark. I tell you it wasn't pleasant to have the teeth of that break tearing at me. I know exactly how the Little Boy's sister feels when nurse combs the tangles out of her long hair, for that is just about what that break did to me, and if I could have said 'ouch' like Nell does, I certainly would have

done so. After we—the other hemp stalks and I—had been combed and carded and spun into threads, we were twisted by a wheel good and hard, and came out of the last process as smooth and strong as you can imagine; then we were wound by a machine into balls, and they called us twine. Some hemp strands are woven into coarse, strong cloth, or are made into great ropes that can bear up hundreds of pounds without breaking. The best ropes in the world are made of hemp. I was glad I was made into twine instead of into rope, for rope has to work so much harder than twine, and its tasks are so much more disagreeable. It is very much nicer to tie up small bundles, play with a kitten or spin a boy's top than to pull great steamboats up close to the wharf, and to drag heavy wagons out of miry places."

"I should think so," cried Button. "But you do not look like those big ropes."

"The only difference is our size. The big ropes are made of the same kind of stuff as the strings the boys use to spin their tops."

"Then they must be giants and strings must be dwarfs," which Captain Ball thought was a very fine speech for a Button.

"Well, to go on with my story," said the String, "the ball of twine of which I was a part was bought by a grocer, and one day I was cut off to tie up a big bag of apples. The maid who took me from the bag left me in a horrible snarl, and I thought my career was over. But the Little Boy saw me on the floor and whooped with delight when he found how strong I was. He said he wished I'd been a mile long, instead of only about two yards. Of course the first thing he did after he cleared me of tangles was to put me in his pocket, but I knew there was lots of fun in store for me, and I patiently bided my time. And soon the sport began, for it was top-spinning season, and we went each day to the park where the boys of the neighborhood congregated, and no top in all the crowd stood up longer or 'went to sleep' with such a humming sound as our Little Boy's, for I always

sent it off straight and strong, without a kink or a knot in all my length to stop its course. All the other boys wanted to borrow me to spin their tops because I was so smooth and strong. Oh, I just love to send a top whirling out, swift and true to peck another top—it's a fine feeling of strength and power!"

"I know about it," broke in the Ball. "I have heard the bat describe the feeling when he hits me square and hard for a long 'fly.' He says it's just as if he owned the whole world, it is so fine, and he feels so powerful."

"Yes, it must be the same feeling—just as if one were a great giant, or a king or something very strong. But to go on with my story: One day one of the boys asked to use me while our Little Boy was going on a message for his mother. Of course our Little Boy thought he wanted me to spin tops with, and so he did at first. But by and by a big red-headed fellow—that same Smith boy—came along with a wallet over his shoulder and called to the other boys to follow him, as there was going to be

lots of fun out on a vacant lot down the alley. So the whole crowd of boys quit their top-spinning and followed. There must have been ten or fifteen of them in the crowd by the time they reached the vacant lot, and then the red-headed fellow opened his wallet and showed what he had—a big, yellow cat in one end and a big gray cat in the other. They were awfully scared-looking, and I felt very sorry for them, but the boys all began to shout: 'A cat fight! a cat fight!' and first one and then another picked up the poor cats and threw them at each other, until the animals were good and mad. But still they would not fight, until at last the red-headed fellow said: "I'll make 'em tear each other to giblets! Who's got a

THE RED-HEADED SMITH BOY

string?' And somebody answered that our Little Boy's string was the strongest in the crowd, and the boy who had borrowed me handed me over to the red-headed fellow. He took me and tied those cats' tails together hard and fast and threw them over a clothes-line, so that each cat hung facing the other, head downwards. The poor things, full of pain from the strain on their tails, began to claw at each other and strive to get their heads up. I suppose they must have thought that each was hindering the other. Then in a moment the fight was on. How they yowled, and how the fur flew, while the boys yelled and whistled through their fingers! That was the only time I was ever sorry of my strength. I longed to break and drop those two suffering, frantic creatures to the ground, but I could not. I could not even come untied, for the red-headed fellow had made the knot so fast. How they spit and bit and scratched, while the boys kept shouting: 'Look at Gray!' 'Go it, old Yellow!' but suddenly who should come running

around the corner but our Little Boy. He rushed into the crowd and saw what was happening. He gave the red-headed fellow a shove, and springing up caught the clothes-line on which the cats hung; it broke with his weight, and we all came tumbling down. The red-headed boy was very angry, but our Little Boy called to him to 'hands off' or he'd get hurt, and began to untie the poor cats. But they were so full of pain by this time that they kept on fighting, so that several of the other boys, who now realized how cruel they had been, came to help undo the hard knot. They had to tie their hands in their handkerchiefs or put their caps over the cats' claws to keep from being scratched. But at last the poor creatures were free and went scampering away in opposite directions. I have seen boys play chase-the-fox, and I have seen scared horses, but I never saw anything run like those two cats! When they had disappeared, one under a house, the other over a high fence, our Little Boy told the others how cruel and cowardly

it was to treat dumb animals that way. He pointed to the red-headed fellow and said he knew it was old 'wood-pecker' who had started this thing, but if the boys were going to follow 'wood-pecker' in all his bad tricks, he did not want to shoot marbles or spin tops with them any more, for he liked to play fair and not with 'savages.' A few of the boys said they did not care, and went off with the red-headed fellow; but most of them had good hearts, and said our Little Boy was right, and they were sorry they had helped tie up the poor cats.

"Then our Little Boy saw that it was his string that had been used to tie the cats' tails, and he rolled me up and said:

" 'I am almost ashamed to put a string like that in my pocket.'

"But that night when he told his mother all about it, she said I was not to blame for holding them so fast, because that was the strong way I had been spun. But she said she was very proud of her Little Boy for rescuing the fighting animals, and she hoped he would al-

ways be as brave as that when he came to be a man."

"That is certainly a nice thing about our Little Boy's mother—she always compliments him when he does something good and true," said the Nail. "Some mothers are very different; but it is good to praise a boy now and then. But I am interrupting you, Mr. String. Pray tell us your other adventure."

"It happened last week when we went nutting—you were with us, Professor Pencil."

"Yes," answered the Pencil; "but I was in the inside pocket of the Little Boy's trousers, and so saw nothing that happened, though I heard all the cries and shouts."

"It happened this way," continued the String. "When we got to the grove where the chestnuts grow, our Little Boy offered to climb the tree, for he is very nimble. Joe Watts was with them—you remember the very small child with the long curls who sometimes plays in our yard? Well, he wanted to climb, too, but the others told him he was too small.

He is an obstinate, head-strong fellow, however, so while our Little Boy was high up among the branches and the two others were busy picking up the dropping nuts, Joe scrambled up the tree, for the branches grew low, and at first the climbing was easy. But after a while he saw some nuts far out on a small branch that grew from the under side of a big bough, and so he went after them. The boys on the ground called to him not to trust himself on the little branch, but he would not listen; so the others went on picking up the chestnuts our Little Boy was shaking down. But presently there came a cracking sound and an awful scream; and there was Joe clinging desperately to the little branch, which was splitting away from the big one, so that it hung down toward the ground. He could not climb back to the main bough, and he hung much too far up for the other boys to reach. There seemed nothing ahead for him but a hard fall on the roots, and a broken leg or arm. It was a sad sight, for he was scared to death and was

crying piteously for help. The boys on the ground were powerless, but our Little Boy came skinning down from the top so fast that I feared he was going to fall too. But he is too nimble for that, and in a minute he was on the big bough just over the dangling little one. But Joe was too far down the broken branch for him to reach, and if he put so much as a hand's weight on it he knew it would finish splitting and drop to the ground. For a minute he did not know what to do; then suddenly he saw the end of me sticking out of his pocket, for I had crept out to see what was happening, and he called to Joe not to be scared, for he would save him. He snatched me out, and lying down on the big bough just over Joe, he leaned down and tied me—doubled—around the little branch just below the split. Then he quickly wound my other end around the big bough and held fast to me. He was just in time, too, for there was a final splitting sound and the small branch parted from the big one. But it could not fall all the way to the ground,

for I had hold of it good and fast. I know I burnt our Little Boy's hands as I slipped through, but he never let go; and there we—that is, the small broken branch and Joe and I—were dangling toward the ground, while our Little Boy kept the other end of me wrapped around the big limb. I had been sorry of my strength when I held the two poor fighting cats together, but now I was very thankful for it. Our Little Boy, lying flat on the big bough and holding on with his knees, let me slip out as far as possible, and that brought the broken branch so near the ground that the tall boy down there could reach up and steady it until poor weeping Joe could climb down safe and sound. And so you see it was I as much as our Little Boy who saved Joe from a broken limb, though I got none of the credit for it when the other boys told about it at home."

"Well, you could not have done anything without the Boy, so really he deserves the credit," said Marble. "You did not think of tying up the limb."

"No; but I held it good and tight after it was tied, and I think the boys might have mentioned that fact. It would have been more just," replied String.

"Is that all of your story?" asked the Nail politely.

"Yes, I believe so. I hope our Little Boy will not lose me any more. Lying in dark corners or tying up bundles is not near as much fun as going nutting or spinning tops——"

"And hanging cats," put in the Ball quite sharply.

"I did not say that," replied the String, taking a kink in himself.

"Some people do not say all they mean," retorted the Ball.

"Dear me, how cross the Captain is to-day. Something must have gone wrong at the game," whispered Button.

"Perhaps the bat whacked him too hard," the Marble answered.

"Or else," said Professor Pencil, with much dignity, "he has been eating needle soup. That

is what my first master, the poet, used to say when the Little Boy was sharp and cross: 'You must have had needle soup for breakfast.' "

Button giggled and looked at Miss Pin's keen point, but the Professor shook his head, so she was afraid to say what was in her mind, for of course if she had made an ill-natured speech he would tell her also that she had partaken of the same soup. And then, too, Miss Pin might get angry and quit closing up that dreadful hole.

"Really," said Captain Ball, "I did not mean to be ugly; I was only teasing. If I hurt your feelings, String, I am sorry."

After which handsome apology the Professor declared everybody must be friends, and by way of forgiveness the String wound a coil of itself affectionately about the Ball. Then the Professor turned to the Nail and said:

"Now it seems to me it's Mr. Nail's time to speak of his travels."

Whereupon the Pin pricked the Ball again,

but this time quite jocosely, and whispered that there was not much fun to be expected from a rusty old nail with a bent back. Which so offended the Nail, who overheard the whisper, that he declared he would not speak at all; but Professor Pencil said gravely:

"It is very wrong for young people to treat old ones with disrespect. Mr. Nail is the oldest member of our company, and should have nothing but kindness from each of us."

Which made Miss Pin sorry for her rude speech; and pretty Button rolled over next to Mr. Nail and petted him into a good humor, and finally he consented to talk.

Mr. Nail's Story

"I was not always rusty like this; once I was new and clean and of a beautiful steel-blue color. Now I am old, and I show the effects of my hard life, for I have had to work. Of course you know I am made of iron, and iron is dug from mines in the ground. Marble has

told you how dark and silent it is down there, and how the men who dig out ores and stones wear lanterns in their caps, just as fine ladies put plumes in theirs. But iron is not found in clean lumps like agate or marble; it is mixed in with dirt and trash; so when it is taken from the mine it is put into the furnace and smelted. That is, it is heated so hot that the real metal melts and runs off in little channels prepared for it, leaving the dross behind. Of course it does not hurt iron to be red hot, and it was certainly nice to feel myself so clean. The bars or chunks of clean metal were called pig-iron. This pig-iron was put into another blast furnace and melted a second time, and while it

MR. NAIL

was liquid it was stirred well, which process expels all oxygen and carbon and is called puddling. After the iron has been puddled it is called wrought iron. This is made into nails, for which process the metal is again heated. Sometimes the metal is cut into thin strips called nail-rods, and sometimes it is drawn out into wire; and in their turn these rods and wires are chopped up into nails, one end being sharpened for the spike and the other flattened for the head. In old times all nails were made by hand; but in recent years machines have been invented that cut the iron rods or wire into nails—pointing and heading them—at the rate of from 100 to 1,000 a minute, according to the size. Nearly all horseshoe nails are still made by hand, because they must be without flaws lest they break off in the animal's hoof, and machines cannot watch for defects. Tacks and brads are only pigmy nails, or dwarfs, if you prefer to call them so. Nails that have very short spikes and very wide heads are called hob-nails, and are used

by shoe-workers in their work. I am called a six-penny nail because it takes one thousand like me to weigh six pounds. If one thousand weighed eight pounds I would be called an eight-penny. Do you understand that, Professor Pencil?"

"Certainly," replied the Professor, clearing his throat. "Nothing could be plainer. If one thousand of you weighed ten pounds you would be called a ten-penny."

"Exactly. You have a very bright mind, Professor."

"I hope I know my arithmetic," answered the Professor haughtily. "I have been doing our Little Boy's examples for a long time—so long, indeed, that I am beginning to wear out with the constant sharpening of my point."

The Nail said he knew that, and he often envied him the ease with which he did it, for he himself had never been to school. Then he went on with his story:

"Well, after all the melting and casting and drawing out had been finished I found myself

in a keg with hundreds of others just like me, and we were headed up and shipped to some distant place. I do not know where we traveled, for we were shut tight in the dark keg; but it must have been a long way, for we heard the rattle of the car wheels and the 'chug, chug' of the big engine for several days. Then we were opened in a hardware store, and one day a carpenter came in and bought a lot of us. He carried us away to a box factory and at last it came my turn to be nailed into the boards. I was horribly frightened when I first saw the big hammer coming down toward me, but it did not hurt one bit. That comes of having such a hard head. The blow that did not even daze me would have smashed Marble into bits and reduced dear little Miss Button to powder. After the box was made it was carried to a big, beautiful house, and a lady with soft white hands and lovely golden hair told the rest of the family it was to be the Christmas box for the orphan asylum. Then they all began to pack it. Oh, the good things

that went into that box—apples, oranges, candies, books, toys—everything you can think of. It was a large box, but it would scarcely hold the things, for every child in the neighborhood brought something for the children who had no parents to tell Santa Claus to come to see them. One little boy gave some of his marbles, another gave one of his tops, another kissed his knife good-by and laid it in and then ran off to keep from crying, for he loved the knife, but he also wanted to give some other boy pleasure. The little girls divided their dolls and books until the kind lady said there was no more room. Then the lid was put on the box and I was driven in good and hard to hold it fast, and away we started and traveled to this very city, and the expressman took us to the asylum. I cannot describe to you the delight of those poor orphans when the lid was pried from the box and all of the things taken out and distributed. They were so happy that some of them cried for joy. It is certainly a pity more children who have so much

do not divide their playthings with the fatherless and motherless ones of the asylums. They would not miss a part of their playthings, and they would help to make those other poor little ones so happy. Every Christmas the children of each neighborhood ought to send a box to the orphan asylum. The best way to keep Christmas is to add to other people's happiness—not to think so selfishly of the gifts one receives.

"Well, after all the toys and goodies were given out, the good Sister in charge told one of the boys to break up the box for kindling, but to save the nails; so all of us nails were drawn out with the claw-hammer and put in a tin box with other nails and screws. After I had been there about a week I was taken out and driven up in the wall on the rear porch, and the children used me to hang their hats and bonnets on. That was not hard work, and I felt so sorry for the poor little things who had no mammas to cuddle them that I liked to serve them. I thought, of course, I had

reached the end of my travels and would spend the rest of my existenee doing my duty there on the poreh. I know I was there for more than a year, for another Christmas eame and went and the blue-eyed lady sent another box. Then one day the grocery wagon broke down at the door and the driver asked the eook for a nail to mend it. The eook eould not find a nail, but the man spied me and drew me out with the claw-hammer and drove me into the broken shaft of the wagon. Now I did not want to go with the man; I wanted to stay and help take care of the hats of those dear children; and so I bent under the hammer, thinking maybe he would put me back on the wall. But he did not; he hit me harder than ever, and left me bent over the broken shaft. I am only a nail, and a nail has to hold together whatever it is driven into, so I did my duty and kept the shaft in place until we got back to the grocery. There I fell out on the ground. Dear me, how dreary it is to lie in a gutter and be first smothered in mud and then powdered with

FINDING THE NAIL

dust! My pretty steel-blue color had long ago faded, but now I got rusty, and that bend in my back was very ugly. I was like an old man

who knows his usefulness is done. But one morning our Little Boy stopped at the grocery for something for his mother, and began to fish around in the gutter while the grocer was putting up the bundle; and presently he found me. Just why a little boy always wants a rusty nail in his pocket nobody knows, but somehow he does; I suppose he thinks he may need it sometimes to mend a gate or weight a fishing line. Anyhow, our Little Boy rubbed the mud from me and put me in his pocket; and there it was I first met you, Professor Pencil."

"Yes," replied the Professor. "I remember the day you came; you broke the point off me the very first hour, and it was your rough head that wore that hole in the pocket that Miss Pin is so good as to keep closed."

Which speech again hurt the Nail's feelings so much that he declined to talk any more, though the Professor had only told what had happened, and had not meant to be rude.

Miss Pin was going to say something to

pacify him and restore the good feeling, when suddenly there was a terrible jostle and a tossing about of everything in sight, so she had her hands full to keep the torn place closed. Everybody was bumped and jostled.

"Dear me, what is the matter?" cried Button, half crying from the scrouging of the Ball; while way down in a corner, Marble was begging String not to strangle him in his tangles.

Whereupon the Professor, who had worked his way to the top of the pocket and peeked out, answered disdainfully: "It's nothing to worry over—our Little Boy caught a fish and jerked it over his head."

Each one drew a breath of relief, and presently when the Little Boy had again dropped his hook into the water and settled down on the log to watch for another bite, Miss Button said she thought it was Professor Pencil's time to give an account of himself, and the others agreed. The Professor moved toward the center of the pocket so the Ball would not stand

on his feet; and having cleared his throat, began very solemnly:

Professor Pencil's Story

"I am not just one substance like Marble, or Button or Mr. Nail. Three things enter into my composition—graphite or carbon, cedar and rubber. Graphite is a mineral —a low form of carbon, while diamond is the highest form. You did not know that my black point is own cousin to the beautiful diamond the Little Boy's mother wears, did you?"

"No, indeed, you don't look the least bit alike," was the answer in chorus.

"Well, we are cousins for all that. The mines where the best graphite comes from are in Siberia; others are in the island of Ceylon, and in this country it is found in the neighborhood of Lake Champlain. I will show you those places on the Little Boy's geography

map some time. Siberia is in Asia, but it belongs to Russia in Europe. Ceylon is a lovely island near the southern point of the peninsula of India. The people who live there are of a beautiful brown color, but they are not negroes. They sell the graphite of their mines to other nations, who make use of it in manufacture. When the graphite is very soft it is called lampblack, and that makes lampblack also cousin to the fine diamond. I was made in Germany—for the Germans are famous pencil makers—of graphite from Siberia, and my cedar cover was part of a tree that grew on a mountain side. To join the two pieces of wood over the graphite or black lead is a very neat job, for nobody can see my seams. The rubber on my top is the gum of a tree that grows far down in the tropics."

Captain Ball nudged the Nail. "What are the tropics?"

"You will have to ask some one else; you see I am not educated," said the Nail, shaking his rusty head quite sadly. Ball next looked

at Marble, who replied that he used to know but had forgotten, but since things grew in them they must be some kind of flower jars. This amused Button so much that she giggled out loud, and String asked her if she knew. Whereupon she stopped laughing and replied quite haughtily:

"It isn't my business to teach you."

"But it is your business, and everybody's business, to be kind and polite," replied Professor Pencil. Then he turned to Ball and said: "The tropics are those parts of the earth's surface where it is always warm. Plants and trees grow there that would die in the cold climates. So you see many parts of the earth are represented in me, small as I am. That is one reason I know so much; my graphite tells me of the far Siberian mines; my cedar sings of the German forest; and my rubber is full of stories of the land where it never snows, but where flowers bloom like an unbroken wreath from year's end to year's end."

"Who would have thought there was so much in you?" cried Marble admiringly.

"Oh, those things are not all that I know," replied the Professor loftily; "for added to them is my private education since I was combined into a pencil."

"Tell us all about it," pleaded pretty Button, nestling up to him in such a partial way that Mr. Nail's feelings were again hurt. He did not like his little friend to desert him; but he did not say anything, and the Pencil continued:

"Of course, machinery is used to roll the graphite into these little round sticks and to fashion the seasoned cedar into the right size and shape to hold the black lead, as the graphite is often called. The gum from the caoutchouc plant——"

"The what?" asked Ball breathlessly. "Really, Professor, you must carry a dictionary with you, you use such big words."

"Caoutchouc is the gum of a tropical plant, and from it my cap is made. The plant grows

only in warm countries, as I said just now. This gum has to be carefully prepared before it is molded into shape. It becomes very soft when heated, but hardens again as it cools. Of course you know that india-rubber is the most elastic of all known substances."

"I have seen the rubber on the Little Boy's bean-shooter stretch until the light shone through it," said Ball.

"I am glad you are so observant," replied the Professor.

"Is caoutchouc just india rubber?" asked Ball.

"Yes," replied the Professor. "But to get back to my story: I do not remember the trip across the ocean from Germany, for I was boxed up and stored in the ship's hold. But finally I arrived in America, and a stationer became my owner. Like most of you here, I was sold in a shop. I was the last pencil in the box on the shelf, and was feeling quite lonely when one day a young man came in and bought me. I knew I should like him from the

first, for he had a gentle way of handling a pencil. He never broke my point or sucked at me when he was thinking of something to write. This young man was the Little Boy's uncle, and we wrote things for the paper—all sorts of stories and poems."

"Oh, Professor! do you remember any of the poems?"

"Why, yes; you see, a writer naturally knows his own poetry."

"Please recite something for us!" pleaded Button, and all the others joined in the request: "Yes, Professor, dear, do recite something."

The Professor cleared his throat slowly:

"Let me see if I can recall anything you can understand—for you see we wrote mostly for grown people; but several times we did things for our Little Boy, who was always begging for a story or a speech. Here is what we wrote for him last Easter:

Tommy's Guess

This morning Tom sat on the door-sill
  And watched me feeding the hens,
And counted the eggs I had gathered
  By twos and fives and tens.

And thought of the basket I sent him
  One day to his home in town—
Of Easter eggs that were purple,
  And scarlet and green and brown.

Then he looked at the milk-white Leghorns
  And he shook his wise little head—
At the hens in mottled gray and black—
  "They didn't lay 'em," he said.

That moment a radiant rooster
  With his crimson comb held high
And feathers aglow in the sunshine,
  Came strutting and scolding by;

And the little boy laughed with pleasure
  And said as he crossed his legs:
"Grandma, I think the big red rooster
  Lays all of the Easter eggs!"

Everybody laughed with delight and begged for another poem; so the Professor gave them this:

Bessie's Family

I have a little family
  Of which I'm very proud;
They never fight and never scratch,
  And never cry out loud.

They sit up in the doll-house there
  When I'm away at school,
Like little ladies born and bred
  By grandma's strictest rule.

I love them so that each one seems
  The apple of my eye,

And if you'll listen just a bit
  I'll tell the reason why.

Well, first there is my new French doll,
  My Marie Antoinette,
Because she has such lovely curls,
  She seems my dearest pet.

Then, this old doll I've washed and scrubbed
  Till she is pale and slick;
I call her now my invalid,
  And love her 'cause she's sick.

Then Pinkie—that's my china doll—
  She fell and broke her knee;
I have to love her mighty much,
  Because she's lame, you see.

And then there's Pinkie's sister Belle
  (She's china, every bit;
She has to wear a Hubbard-dress,
  'Cause nothing else'll fit).

Onee as I washed her rosy faee,
  She slipped and cräeked her nose.
Oh, how I've loved her ever sinee,
  Not even mamma knows!

And last of all there's Sookey Ann,
  My rag doll, big and fat;
I'm fond of Sookey, though she is
  As black as papa's hat.

For Sookey minds the other dolls
  When I'm not there to see;
I make her hand the eups around
  When all the rest have tea.

Now, that is every doll I own—
  I've broken all the rest;
You ask which one among the four
  I really love the best?

I'll have to whisper very low,
  There's none of them that knows.
You will not tell?—well, then, I think
  It's Belle, who smashed her nose!

"That," continued the Professor, "was intended for a speech, but our Little Boy said he would not recite that, for it was for a girl; so he took it to school to the little girl with yellow hair who sits across the aisle from him, and his uncle and I had to think of something else for him. Finally we pleased him with this:

The Surrender at Yorktown

The morning broke full grandly
  From wreaths of silver mist—
The bright October morning
  All gold and amethyst.
Upon the plain at Yorktown,
  In two long martial rows,
The French and Patriot victors
  Await the conquered foes.

Upon his milk-white charger
  Sat Washington serene;
It was the proudest moment
  America had seen.

For the long, sad war was ended
  And here in triumph stood
The "ragged Continentals"
  Who had won it with their blood.

And then from trench and rampart
  Marched out the silent host—
The files in scarlet trappings,
  Old England's pride and boast.
She would have wept with anger
  Could she have seen that day
Her soldiers march as captives
  Between that proud array.

No flaunting flags and banners
  Above the captives float,
No merry martial music
  Rings out from bugle throat.
Their colors, cased and folded,
  Told tales of sad defeat,
And dirge-like in their rollings
  The muffled war drums beat.

But Lord Cornwallis, humbled,
  Feigned sickness in his tent,
And by the brave O'Hara
  His sword and scabbard sent.
Then turned our grand old leader,
  To Lincoln gave the word;
Forth stepped the noble patriot
  And took the English sword.

Then all that British legion
  On Yorktown's hallowed ground,
'Twixt French and Continentals
  Their conquered arms laid down.
Oh, praise to Continentals,
  For surely 'tis their due
Since no taunting shouts of triumph
  Upon the breezes flew!

That night in Philadelphia
  The watchman calls the hours:
" 'Tis two; and Lord Cornwallis
  And all his host are ours!"

From every doorway in the town
  A shouting concourse swells,
And night was full of music
  From brazen throats of bells!

"You see, this came in very well, for the Little Boy had just been studying about George Washington and the War of the Revolution, and Yorktown was the last battle of that war. The whole English army surrendered there to General Washington. The Little Boy tries to be like Washington, who was so good that even when he was a child he could not tell a lie."

"It is a very fine poem, Professor; and I am sure you must be very proud to have helped the poet write it. You are so wise I wonder you care to associate with an ignorant old man like me," said the Nail humbly.

"You have good manners and good principles, Mr. Nail, and they make the gentleman," said the Professor politely, for he never liked to hurt people's feelings.

"Oh, I do love poetry!" cried the Button. "Somehow the wavy music of it reminds me of the sea. I wish you would go on with some more."

But the Pencil said that three poems at a time was enough for anybody's digestion; so he went on with his story:

"I never knew what it was to get a whole night's rest while I belonged to the poet, for frequently we sat up until far toward daylight, writing things for the papers and magazines. Finally I grew so short that his long fingers could not hold me comfortably, and he left me on the tray on his desk and got another pencil. It was very hard at first to see somebody else doing my work, but I *was* tired with so much writing and rhyming. Then one day our Little Boy came in and asked his uncle to help him do his examples—they were in multiplication and *so* hard—four figures to multiply by! And his uncle showed him his mistakes, and then gave me to him because I was quite long enough for his chubby fingers. That is how I came

to go to school with him and learn arithmetic. We got on very well with addition and subtraction, but multiplication was certainly 'vexation'; and long division pretty nearly conquered us. Indeed, I don't know how we would ever have gotten on had it not been that the poet used to stop writing rhymes long enough to explain things; for our Little Boy never would cheat about the answers, like some of the others did—particularly that big, red-headed Smith boy. One day that boy borrowed me to work with, and at the end of the example he just copied the answer out of the book. I tell you, I was ashamed to make the figures—some children never seem to think that a pencil wants to be square and honest. When he dropped me I rolled over on the paper and tried to rub out those stolen figures, but I could not rub hard enough all by myself. So he went to class and read his answer very glibly; but when the teacher looked at his work, she kept him in; and I was glad of it."

"It certainly served him right; I wish some-

body would keep him in for fudging," said Marble, for none of the little company in the pocket liked the red-headed Smith boy.

"Another thing that our Little Boy found very hard to learn was spelling," the Professor went on. "Geography, history and grammar seemed easy enough, but he *would* miss his spelling. Now, you know I had been trained by the poet, and I knew my spelling all right, and when you know the right of a thing it is not pleasant to be made to say it the wrong way. So I would try as hard as I could to write the correct letter. Between my trying to write one thing and his trying to write another it was sometimes hard to say just what *was* meant. Particularly was it hard for him to get it into his head which stood first, the *e* or *i* after a *c* or an *l*. And that was how he lost the prize in spelling—he just mixed those letters up so that they looked like a crazy-quilt-patch of words. Of course somebody else got the prize, but that night the poet gave him a rule to go by that never misses. He said:

'The *i* comes first if it is after an *l*, and the *e* first if it is following a *c*; just as in the word *lice*. Don't you see, the *i* comes next to the *l*, and the *e* next to the *c*? That is the way it always is. When you are in doubt, just think of that word and you will immediately know how *i* and *e* follow *l* and *c*.'

"So now the Little Boy has no trouble with words that have those letters. It is such a good rule that I wish all little boys knew it, for many of them get sadly mixed up over such words as belief and receive."

"It sounds so easy I think I could learn to spell myself," remarked the Ball; whereupon Miss Pin pricked him for his vanity.

"You could not learn anything, with that big, round, hard head of yours," she laughed.

"Come, come, Miss Pin," said the Nail, seeing how angry Ball was looking. "Don't be sarcastic and rude because none of us are as sharp as you. Ball can do many things that are out of your reach."

And String sang in a mocking undertone:

"Needle soup, needle soup for b-r-e-a-k-f-a-s-t!" until Miss Pin looked ashamed of herself.

"How can I help being sharp, with a point like that?" she asked apologetically.

"There is another rule the poet gave the Little Boy which would help all other boys if they knew it," said the Professor. "This one was a grammar rule. In grammar you know the words are all divided into classes, such as nouns, verbs, and so on. Now the verbs have five moods, the indicative, the potential, the subjunctive, the imperative, and the infinitive; and each mood has a different meaning. But somehow our Little Boy could not get these meanings apart until one day the poet took him in his study and gave him this rule: 'Here are five fingers,' he said, holding up his hand, 'one for each mood. Now, the indicative mood points out or indicates, doesn't it?'

" 'Yes,' said the Little Boy.

" 'Well, this first finger is the one that points

out or indicates things, so it is the indicative mood.'

"'I see,' said the Boy.

"'Potential means powerful or mighty, doesn't it? Well, this middle finger is the most powerful one of the five, for you can hold up more on it than on the tip of any of the others. So this is the potential mood.'

"'I see,' the Boy said again.

"'Subjunctive means doubt or uncertainty. This third finger is always wavering between the middle and the little finger—doubtful which it will help; so this is the subjunctive mood.'

"'Yes, I understand,' replied the Boy.

"'Imperative means to be commanding or bossy. Now, if you notice, little men are apt to be very bossy and masterful; so this little finger is the imperative mood.'

"'You make it very plain,' said the Boy.

"'Infinitive means unlimited, not bound to any one thing. So here is the thumb,' and the poet ran his thumb along the tips of the other

four fingers; 'it helps all of the other moods, and so it is the infinitive.'

"And after our Little Boy had said it over to himself on his own fingers, it was just as plain as day to him, and he never again missed his lesson on moods."

The Professor paused here, and String, snickering softly, touched Button and pointed to Ball, who, with closed eyes, seemed to be counting off something.

"Trying to learn your grammar moods, Captain?" asked Button.

"No," answered Ball. "I was trying to fit those big words into my game. Indicative, that must be the pitcher, who indicates or starts things. Potential, that is the batter, who hits the ball a powerful lick. Subjunctive, that is a man caught between bases and don't know where to run. Imperative, that is the umpire, who bosses the game; and infinitive is the short-stop, who helps everybody out."

The Professor smiled. "You have certainly made an apt application of the rule, Captain

Ball. If you would only go to school for a while, you would soon pick up an education."

"He would not stick to his work," said Button. "He'd be running off with the bat and playing hooky every afternoon."

"The only reason you did not do the same thing was because you were sewed to Nell's coat and could not get away," retorted the Ball.

"Come, come, Captain," said the Professor, "be more civil. The first thing in a gentleman's education is to learn politeness toward ladies."

"Yes, Professor Pencil, I know that; but if Miss Button will eat needle soup for breakfast she must expect it to burn her. But, really, I am sorry I was rude."

"And I was only joking; I did not mean to make you angry," said Button.

"Last week," continued Professor Pencil, after order had been restored, "the Little Boy and I did a very naughty thing—you know I told you that though he never cheated, he was

sometimes mischievous. Well, that day we wrote a note to the little girl with yellow hair; it went like this: 'Your hair looks just like good molasses candy. I wisht I could bite it. if you wont let Jim take your books home Ile give you my perle nife.' And when he thought teacher was not looking he just flipped it over on the little girl's desk. But Jim Smith saw, and he told; and the teacher took the note and copied it on the blackboard where all the children could see and laugh at the bad spelling. The Little Boy was never so mortified in his life, and I did think it was very unkind in the teacher, but that was not the first note he had written the yellow-haired girl, and I suppose he had to be taught better. As soon as he got a chance he took me out and wrote another note; this one was to Jim Smith, telling him to wait at the poplar tree on the way home and he'd lick him. And he did, and felt much better. To-morrow is composition day and we have written a fine one. The subject the

teacher gave him was ants, and this is the way the composition reads:

" 'Snakes is long; grubworms is short. ants is very industrious.'

"He has spelled it out very well, for he wrote it in the poet's study, and asked about the long words. I do hope he will get the prize. All this work I am doing is wearing me out very fast. I'm nothing but a little stub now, and soon I'll be too old and dwindled to do anything; but I have had a very beautiful and busy life, and when one has done his duty —written poems and worked examples and all that and never cheated—one must be satisfied to see old age creep on. It is only when one has done no good in the world that he needs to fear the end."

There was a long silence when the Professor had finished, each one of the little company no doubt thinking of the truth and beauty of his words, and wondering how he or she had lived up to this principle. Perhaps Miss Pin's conscience was more aroused than anybody's, for

presently when Mr. Nail had thanked the Professor for his good words and turned to her and said:

"Miss Pin, I believe I'll call on you next," she was so confused that she could not answer. She was remembering how her waspish temper often made her prick people with her keen little point.

"I wish Old Man Knife was here," sighed String, seeing that Pin was in no hurry to speak. "No doubt he would have some very delightful experiences to give us."

"Ah, I don't know about that," sniffed Marble. "Mr. Knife never was very pleasant in his manners; he was even sharper than Miss Pin."

"That is true," said Captain Ball. "I never knew a more *cutting* person." At which even the Nail smiled.

"Besides," continued Marble, "I doubt if he ever had anything very interesting to happen to him; his chief business was to peel apples and keep Professor Pencil's point good and

sharp, and there is nothing very exciting about things like that. It's not like hitting the middle man or the other boy's taw good and square."

"Nor like going on a 'fly' and scattering the people from the bleachers by dropping down among them *ker-whack!*" put in Ball. "That is real fun!"

"Oh, he sometimes did other things besides peeling apples and sharpening pencils," said String. "For instance, he cut the Little Boy's fingers occasionally."

"Which was very naughty of him if he did it on purpose," said Mr. Nail gently. "But perhaps it was an accident."

"Oh, he was always *slipping up,*" answered String, winking at the Professor. "He had a pearl handle that came out of the sea like Button, and a metal blade made of steel, which is very like iron; so I think we can guess his story."

"Yes, we can guess the part of his story that tells how he was made; and for my part, I am

glad not to hear about all the hands and fingers he has cut," sighed little Button.

"I have been wondering for several days where he was," said Marble. "I did not know, until Professor Pencil told us, that the Little Boy had given him to the yellow-haired girl who sits across the aisle."

"Neither did I," declared String. "I just thought of course he was lost."

"Please, please," cried Miss Pin, all in a tremor, "don't use that word! The sound of it makes me so nervous I nearly let go the edges of the hole."

"For goodness' sake, Mr. String," panted Marble, quaking with fright, "don't say anything to disturb her! Just think what would happen if that hole were left open."

"It is too terrible to think about," declared Button, scrouging down in the corner under Captain Ball. "Please, Miss Pin, don't pay any attention to Mr. String; you can't get lost as long as you hold tight to that torn

place—and neither can we. Try and calm your nerves."

"If you had been lost and found as often as I, you would not wonder at my nervousness," replied Pin. "It is heart-breaking to lie for days and days in a crack or under the edge of a carpet, and have people step over you or on you."

"Well, you are in very good company now," laughed Ball, "and I agree with Mr. Nail that it is your time to tell what has happened to you; so speak up."

Professor Pencil also begged for the recital, and after taking a fresh grip on the frazzled edges of the pocket and telling Ball to watch and warn her if she forgot to keep a good hold on their point of danger, she began:

Miss Pin's Story

"Several of our stories seem to begin somewhat alike; for I, too, am metal, and all metal is dug from mines in the ground in much the

same way, so I will not go into particulars of that kind. Only I am two metals—brass and tin, and as brass is made of zinc and copper, you see I have quite a number of ingredients. It is these brassy metals in me that make it bad for a girl to put me in her mouth—I injure her teeth and keep her breath from being sweet.

"Pins are made from wire which has been drawn out as it is for nails, only much thinner. The wire is cut into pieces the length of four pins, and each end is sharpened, and a pin length is cut from each side. How much wire is left after these two are cut off, Professor Pencil?"

"Since the wire was long enough for four pins, and two have been cut off, two will be left," replied the Professor promptly.

"Quite right," continued Miss Pin. "The ends of the piece that is left are sharpened, and it is then cut in half—and we have the four pins. It takes two men to sharpen a pin—one grinds the point bluntly and the other makes it keen

and also polishes it. A skilful grinder can sharpen thirty or forty at a time, holding them in such a way that they all touch the grindstone or sharpening wheel. The heads are put on separately, the metal being made very hot for the head to blend well with the point part. A good workman can head from twelve to fifteen thousand pins a day."

Captain Ball pulled the end of the String, whispering excitedly: "Fifteen thousand! Can anybody count that much?"

"Certainly," replied the String, in the same low voice; "the Professor can count twice as much as that, and not half try."

Ball looked at the Pencil with increased admiration. "And just to think, I never got beyond three."

"Oh, that is all you need to know, for three outs finishes the inning," answered String, thinking of the rules of the ball game.

"Yes, that is all I need; but I would like to hear the Professor count all those thousands just for curiosity."

"Please come to order so that Miss Pin can go on," said Nail, frowning at the interruption. And when Ball and String had apologized, Miss Pin continued:

"After the heads are put on, pins are boiled in beer dregs or some acid, and this is called 'souring.' They are then ready to be plated or covered with tin to whiten them. After they are taken from the liquid, they are dried and cleaned by being shaken in a leather bag of bran, and come out clean and white.

"You know that although tin is very inexpensive it is found in only a very few places. England, Australia, Bolivia and the Malay Peninsula probably have the most extensive tin mines in the world. Perhaps Professor Pencil will tell you something of these countries."

"With pleasure," said the Professor. "England and Australia are both islands, one in Europe, the other beyond Asia in the Indian Ocean. Bolivia is a country of South America,

and the Malay Peninsula is a narrow strip of land at the south of Asia."

"Indeed, Professor, I don't see how you carry all that information in your head," said Ball. "As I said before, my head is ten times as big as yours, but there is not one-tenth as much in it."

"Tell us something we don't know," drawled Marble, making fun, and String began to laugh; but little Button silenced them by saying softly:

"Needle soup for breakfast!"

Then Miss Pin went on with her story:

"When the pins are cleared of the bran they are ready to be stuck in the papers. This used to be done by hand, but now they have a machine that pinches up the paper and punctures the holes, and then runs the pins in. It is very wonderful—but for that matter all machinery is wonderful. Two little girls, feeding the paper and pins into this machine, can easily put up several thousand papers a day. That is one reason pins are so cheap—the material

of which they are made is inexpensive, and machinery has reduced the cost of labor. Three hundred years ago the first pins were made by hand, and they cost a good deal of money compared to the present price. What with sharpeners, cutters, headers, 'sourers,' and so on, it formerly took fourteen workmen to make a pin; that is, fourteen men worked on each pin before it was finished; but the invention of the machines has changed all that.

"Well, I went through all the different processes and at last found myself the fifth pin in the third row of a neat paper—you know how bright and regular the rows are. Of course somebody bought the paper I was in, just as the rest of you were bought. I was carried home by the young lady who then owned me, and you may believe I was proud to serve her, for she was no other than our Little Boy's big sister, and you have all seen her and know how pretty she is. I thought she would never get to me, for I was the fifth pin in the third row, and I was all impatience to

hold one of her pretty ribbons in place. Well, at last she got down to me, and one night I was set to hold in place the pink ribbon of her ball dress. I was so proud that I felt sure I was better than any other pin in the world. She used me several days to fasten her dress in different ways, then one day she gave me to a young man to hold a rose on his coat, and I went with him to all sorts of places; but instead of the nice perfume of my lady owner's things, I was always smelling tobacco, for this young man smoked. One day I worked out of his coat and fell on the street. Then it was I got acquainted with Jimmy. You know Jimmy is the little bootblack who sits at the corner and shines shoes. He saw me and was glad to pick me up and use me to hold his poor tattered coat together. It would have taken a whole row of pins to mend all the holes in that coat, it was so ragged. But I did my best with the big hole in the shoulder, for I soon learned to like the boy, he was so kind and honest. He never cheated in change or in

shining; always he did his job right and always he gave back every penny that the customer had a right to. One day a big fat man was in the chair and Jimmy was rubbing away at his shoe as hard as he could, when a pretty young lady went by, walking very fast. She had on very fine clothes, and just as she passed Jimmy a beautiful breastpin she had worn at her throat came unfastened and fell to the ground. Jimmy saw it, and like a flash he had snatched it up. For a few moments he stood looking at it, no doubt thinking of all the good things he could buy with the price of it if he kept it. No one had seen him pick it up, for the people on the sidewalk were all hurrying one way or another, and the big fat man was reading his paper. It was a terrible temptation, for Jimmy's mother was sick and very poor, and the money for this pin would pay for a doctor and medicine. But he knew it was wrong to keep it, so he felt he must give it back to the girl. But she was already a good way off, still walking very fast; so Jim-

my, forgetting all about the fat man, dropped his brush and started after her. The fat man, looking up from his paper and seeing only one shoe shined and the boy running away, jumped up and began to shout to him. People stopped or turned around to see what it all meant, and the policeman, thinking Jimmy must have stolen something from the fat man, ran after the boy. There was great excitement and all the time Jimmy was calling out: 'Lady, your shiner! your shiner!' for that was what he called a diamond. And the fat man was shouting: 'Come back here, you young rascal, and black my other shoe!' And the policeman was screeching: 'Stop thief!' Just at the corner he grabbed Jimmy by the shoulder, but I was there, and when his fat fingers closed over me I just gave him the *biggest scratch!* and he let go in a hurry. Then Jimmy caught the girl and gave her the pin, telling her she had dropped it by his blacking-box. She was so surprised and so very glad; and she opened her purse to pay Jimmy, but just then the fat man came puf-

fing up. He was the girl's father, and when he understood all about the pin, he was so pleased that he took Jimmy home with him, and now he is working in the fat man's store."

"That is like a story out of a book," said Mr. Nail. "I am always so glad when I hear of honesty being rewarded. But pray, Miss Pin, tell us the rest."

"I'd like to say I'm glad you scratched that policeman," put in Marble. "I don't like policemen; one day one of them kicked me from the pavement."

"I quite agree with you about policemen," said Captain Ball. "They don't want us to play a game even on the vacant lots. I got arrested one day as I came down from a long 'fly'; and for two days I stayed in that policeman's pocket. Then the Little Boy begged me back again—for I am a League ball, and none but the best play in the League."

"That is very interesting, but we are interrupting the story. Miss Pin, will you go on?"

begged Mr. Nail, fearing that her feelings would be hurt by so many interruptions.

"Of course Jimmy lost me," continued the Pin, sighing. "Somehow pins are *always* being lost. Where they all go is a question not even the wise men of the earth can answer. But I was found. A little girl picked me up on the street near the store where Jimmy works, and so I went to school in her apron. She was a very good little girl about some things, but she was naughty about chewing her gum in school. Of course that is against the rule, and I made up my mind I would break her of the bad habit. She pinned up the ripped corner of her apron with me, and I waited there just like a sentinel guarding a fort. Every time she put her hand toward the gum in the pocket I raised up and pricked her finger, and so reminded her not to break the rule. At first she obeyed the hint and left the gum where it was. But finally she began again, and I had to prick so hard that I really hurt her, and she grew so angry that she

snatched me out of her apron, and threw me on the floor. I slipped into a crack, and there I lay for days. Children trod over me and the janitor swept over me, and I began to think that I would have to remain there always. But at last one day I saw a little girl look at me, and presently I heard her say:

" 'See a pin and pick it up—
All that day you'll have good luck;
See a pin and let it lie—
You'll want that pin before you die.'

And down she stooped and dug me out of the dust in the crack. I tell you it felt nice to be sticking in a piece of soft ribbon after that long wait in the dirt. My new owner was a merry little girl, and I went on long romps with her—and of course I got lost again! Somehow I just could not hold on to the edges of her ribbons, she danced about so much. This time a white-capped maid picked me up, and for several days I held up the bib of her

apron. But she was always scolding at me because I did not readily go through the starched linen. She called me 'horrid' and 'dull' until I lost my own temper. I am not very amiable myself, and I grew tired of her complaints; and one day when she pushed me so rudely that I bent I made up my mind that I'd be even with her. So when she gave me another bad push I slipped through the cloth quite suddenly and stuck in her finger so that it bled."

"That was very ill-natured of you," said Mr. Nail reprovingly.

"Well, she called me dull, and she bent my back until I was all deformed," snapped Miss Pin. "People can't expect us to stand everything. Often when a pin scratches a child it is in punishment for bad usage or bad temper. You just watch and see if I am not right."

"I never thought of that," said Mr. Nail.

"There are a great many things you never thought of," retorted the Pin. "You are all bent yourself, and I guess you would have

scratched back when it happened, if you had had a sharp point."

"No," said the Marble gently; "for Mr. Nail has a very much nicer disposition than you."

And this made the Pin so angry that she wanted to let go the edges of the pocket and give Marble a good pricking. But Professor Pencil quieted her and made her feel sorry for her hasty words.

"You ought to be glad some one told you of your fault, so that you can correct it. Nobody makes friends by scratching and fighting," he said. "You are a good girl in many ways; for instance, you are keeping that hole so that we are all safe here in the Little Boy's pocket. If you can do that, you ought to control your temper so people will love you. Your point was not given you to scratch with. But now let us go on with your story. What did the maid do when you stuck her finger?"

"She cried 'ouch!' and sucked the place, and then pulled me rudely out of the cloth and

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threw me on the floor; and so I was lost once more. Oh, it is dreadful to be eternally getting lost! This time I was swept up in the dust pan and thrown out in the back yard; and I lay so long in the trash that I thought I was never going to be found. But the stable boy picked me up at last, and one day when he was cleaning the carriage I managed to work out of his jacket and fall on the cushion, hoping the young lady would see me and take me back to pin her ribbons. I stuck there for several days, but the coachman brushed me out finally, and there I was in the dust of the street once more. I cannot tell you how many times I have been lost and found. I belonged to a lame shoestring seller, a newsboy, a pretty shop-girl, and several other people, being lost by each in turn. I have pinned up all kinds of things; but the owner I hated most to work for was a professor of natural history who used me to pin butterflies to a board while he studied their colors and shapes. Impaling, he called it; and I just hated to do it. It is much nicer

to pin ribbons than poor butterflies. When the professor misplaced me I was glad of it, even if the street where I fell was full of dust. The apple-woman found me and used me to hold her shawl on tight. I liked the old woman, although she was wrinkled and ugly, for she had a kind heart, and she never abused me. But once she failed to stick me in the shawl real good, and I dropped to the pavement in front of her stall. I lay there all day and watched the people coming and going. Most of them never saw me, but one girl did and stooped to pick me up; but instantly drew back, crying out: 'The head is toward me—I would have bad luck all day!' and so she went on her way. Just about night our Little Boy stopped to buy an apple, and seeing me he grabbed me up, for my point was toward him, and that meant good luck. I have belonged to him about a week, and I have had a lively time of it. I have held the tail to his kite and sailed far up toward the blue sky. Several times he has used me for a hook—you remember I am

badly bent—and, with String for a line, we have fished in the bright water. Sometimes the little fish nibbled at me, but I was too straight at the point to hold them, so they fell back into the brook and flapped their shining tails at the Boy as they swam away.

"You all remember what happened at school yesterday—how that red-headed Smith boy borrowed me, and, sticking me through a bit of crumpled paper, left me in the teacher's chair. I tried not to stick the poor man as he sat down, but I could not help it. Then everybody was questioned, and the Smith boy said I was our Little Boy's pin. And our Little Boy could not deny it, but although he said he did not put me in the chair he would not tell who did, for our Little Boy is no tell-tale. Therefore he was kept in, because the teacher thought he must have lent me to somebody to put in the chair. He took his punishment, but after school he told the Smith boy how mean he thought he was, and I think they would have had a fight if some of the big boys had

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not interfered. I wanted a chance to scratch that red-headed boy myself; I wish he would borrow me again. Just as our Little Boy took me out of the crumpled paper after school, you slipped out of this hole in his pocket, Marble; you remember, don't you? And so he pinned up the hole with me and told me to keep you all safe until he could get his mamma to sew up the place; and I am doing my best. Of course I know he will lose me again. It is the fate of pins to be lost," concluded Miss Pin quite mournfully.

"But you will also be found again," said Mr. Nail consolingly.

"That is true; but we go from owner to owner, never knowing who the next will be. From the time we leave our place in the shining row in the paper we are like little tramps, drifting from place to place, often lying for days in cracks and dust heaps, often belonging to people who bend us and abuse us. What becomes of us finally no one knows, for you

often hear people wondering where the lost pins go."

"I think most of us are alike in that respect," answered Button; "none of us can tell what our end will be."

"I know my end," said Professor Pencil. "I shall be sharpened and sharpened until there is nothing left of me. But that is what I was made for; and if we spend our lives and wear ourselves out doing the work we were intended for, then we have no regrets, no self-reproaches."

"We all know you and Mr. Nail have worked very hard," said Marble. "I have done nothing but play all my life."

"That is what you were created for; and as long as you play a fair game you have done your duty," replied the Professor. "It is as honorable to play fair as to work hard, if you were created to play."

There was a little silence in the pocket; each one was thinking of what the Professor had said and wondering if he had always done his

duty. Little Miss Pin was sorry she had scratched so many people; it seemed so naughty and useless now when she thought it over; even the maid who had given her that bad hump in her shining back need not have been pricked quite so hard. She made up her mind that she would try and be better-tempered to her next owner—unless it happened to be that Smith boy; she felt she would just have to scratch him good and hard one time.

Presently Mr. Nail broke the silence, saying as he looked about him:

"I believe everybody has spoken except Captain Ball. I think we had better hear him now while the Little Boy is so quiet."

"I believe the Little Boy has gone to sleep," said String, trying to crawl out of the pocket to see; but Professor caught in a loop through him and pulled him back.

"You have too much curiosity, String. If you crawl out too far you will fall and be as badly lost as poor Pin ever was. Just stay quiet and hear what Ball has to tell us. I ex-

pect it will be very interesting. The Little Boy is not asleep—I can hear him whistling. Now, if Mr. Nail and Miss Button will stop talking, Captain Ball will begin."

So everybody grew silent and looked at Ball.

Captain Ball's Story

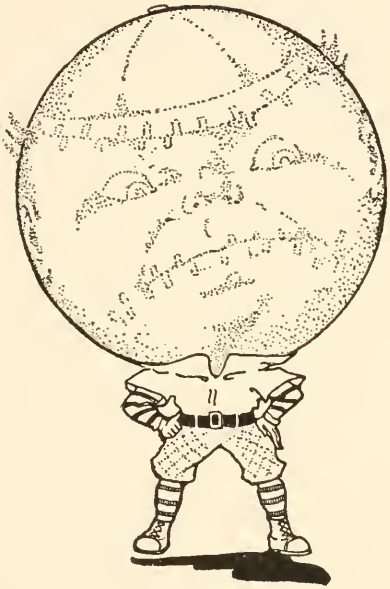
"Well," said the Ball slowly, as he turned over in the crowded pocket.

"Don't scrouge so!" cried Professor Pencil breathlessly. "You'll break my point."

"I beg your pardon," said the Ball, "but every time the Little Boy gets a bite at his hook he jumps, and that sets me to rolling. But now he is still and I will begin again. Well, first I must tell you what I am made of —though really I did not know the scientific name of one of my parts until Professor Pencil told me. I am made of rubber or caoutchouc (thank you, Professor, for giving me the word), wrapped with yarn and covered with

leather. And because I am a League ball I weigh five and a quarter ounces, and measure nine and a fourth inches around."

"It would be well to say your circumference is nine and a fourth inches," suggested Pencil.



CAPTAIN BALL

"Dear me," said Ball, trying to look down at himself, "have I a circumference? I did not know it. What is it like?"

"Your circumference is your measure around," explained the Pencil.

"Is that so? That is another word you have given me, Professor. I shall try and remem-

ber it. It has a very nice sound. I shall be quite well educated if the Little Boy leaves us together long enough."

"It is a pleasure to teach you," replied the Professor pompously. "Just ask me anything you wish to know. But now get on with your story."

"Very well. All League balls have to be the same size and weight; that helps to make the game fair. But I wish to tell you that I was not always dirty and stained like this. Once the leather with which I am covered was beautifully white—that was when Manager Murphy bought me and carried me out to the ball grounds. A great game was on for that day—the Reds against the Blues, and a fine crowd filled the Grand-stand. Glen was to pitch for the Reds, and the minute I saw him at practice I liked him. You don't know how it hurts a fine ball's pride to be handled by a poor pitcher; it's humiliating—very. But I saw that Glen was all right, and I just longed to get into the game. When the bell rang for

the teams to line up, Manager Murphy tossed me over to Umpire Hazy, but he had several other balls in his blouse, and so it was toward the end of the third inning before I saw any real work. Then one of the Blues knocked a foul over the fence, and Hazy took me out of his blouse and tossed me to Glen in the pitcher's box. Glen caught me and looked at me carefully.

" 'You are all right,' he said, giving me a pat. 'Now, you go just where I want you, for you and I have got to win this game.'

"Of course that made me feel very important, and I knew I was going to do my best. Then the umpire said 'play ball,' and Glen grabbed a handful of dust and rubbed it all over me, saying it was a pity to spoil my good looks, but that I was too slippery to handle well. Then he waited a minute while over by the plate the Blue batter sawed the air with his bat and spit on his hands. My head began to ache with the prospect of a blow from that bat; I wondered if it would not burst me to

pieces. I believe for just a minute I was a coward about it. Then my courage came back, and I was eager for the game—hit or miss, it would make no difference, so I had done my best. Quite suddenly Glen doubled himself into a knot, just as String would if he were twisted hard, and away he sent me toward the Blue batter, who was so surprised at the suddenness of it that he missed, and the umpire called 'strike'; and the catcher threw me back to Glen. Again Glen held me tight and squirmed and twisted, and again I went whizzing across the diamond, and again the batter missed. Somehow Glen knew exactly how high or how low to throw me, so that ugly-looking bat never touched me. Things went that way until three men had been struck out, and up in the Grandstand the people were shouting and clapping for Glen.

"The next time he went to the box he knew he had to work hard, for somehow the Reds had been batting poorly during their innings, and the score was behind. Glen pitched pretty

well at first, for neither of the first two Blues who went to bat got beyond second. And then things began to go wrong with us, for the Blues were hitting me hard—*whack! whack! whack!*—and first thing we knew they had a man on first and one on second, and up in the Grand-stand people were crying:

" 'Rotten! rotten—get a pitcher—get a move on!' and that meant they were losing faith in me and Glen.

"If the Blues got those two men to the home plate, they'd win the game; so Glen was troubled. I could feel his hand shake as he twisted me around and around in his wide palm. Oh, but I was a hot ball, I tell you, when finally I went flying toward that Blue batter! And he knew it, for he braced himself to meet me. I tried hard to doge the bat, but I couldn't; 'z-i-p!' it hit me hard as a hammer, and away I went back across the diamond, reeling like I was drunk. I saw Glen's white face as I flew past, and I knew it was up to me to save that game. The strength of the blow was

failing out of me, and I knew I would never reach the left-fielder who was waiting for me with lifted hands, hoping to catch me on the fly. But the third baseman was nearly under me, so down I came, dropping like a bit of hot lead almost into his hands—and that baseman *muffed* me! And the Blue on second got to third, and the crowd yelled:

"'Rotten on third!' and others screamed: 'Hurrah for the Blues—the Blues are the cheese!'

"But our short-stop had run like a deer to where I had bounced, and snatching me up he caught the Blue from first base before he reached second and put him out; but the batter who had hit me got safely to first base. And that left them one man on third and one on first. Then Glen took me again, and presently I was flying from his hand to another Blue batter who was waiting for me at the home plate. Glen sent me with such force that I seemed to make a straight streak through the air, and when that bat hit me it sounded like an

explosion, the blow was so terrible. Back I turned, almost stunned for the moment; then I got my bearings, and I headed straight for Duffy out in center-field. Now Duffy can run —and Duffy can catch; and so in a minute I was dropping down, down toward him, trying hard to keep the force of the bat's blow in me until he got closer. I thought he was going to miss me, and if baseballs ever cried I would have done so then. But, as I said, Duffy can run and Duffy can catch, and just as I was giving up hope and was almost to the ground, he got there and grabbed me on the fly, and then quick as a flash he slammed me down to the catcher and caught the Blue who was running from third to home. That made three outs, and three outs ends the inning, and of course we won. And up in the Grand-stand the people just went crazy with shouting and clapping for me and Glen, for of course it was we who had done the work."

"It must have been very exciting, almost as

good as a game of taw," said Marble, much interested.

Ball looked at him indignantly. "As *good* as marbles! What are you talking about? Why, one game of ball is worth all the marbles that were ever played. Marbles is a child's game—ball is sport for men."

"Well, anyhow, you belong to the Little Boy now," replied Marble sharply, "and you have to play a little boys' game."

"Yes, that is true," answered Ball with a sad sigh. "Glen likes our Little Boy, and he gave me to him after that great game. Of course I love our Little Boy, for he plays on the square, but it's not like playing with professionals; I miss the straight, strong throws, the clean catches, the hard hits."

"I should think you would be glad to miss the hard hits," said Miss Button, with a little shiver of fright. "It gives me the 'all-overs' just to think of them."

"No," said Ball, "we balls like them. Instead of hurting, it feels good to have a bat

whack you like a sledge-hammer. It's fine to go sailing up and up like a bird, knowing that hundreds of eyes are watching you. It is as good as if you had wings until the force of the blow begins to die out of you, and you come swooping to the ground wondering if you will be caught on the fly, or if somebody will make a home run."

"I suppose the little boys can't send you on those dizzy flights," said Professor Pencil.

"No; they are not strong enough. Nor can they catch me as well as the men do; they often muff or miss me. It is really very trying on a ball that has won a League game to be tossed and battered about by children. To-morrow I believe the 'Cats' are going to play the 'Owls,' and as our Little Boy is pitcher for the 'Cats,' I suppose I shall be in the game; but I do wish Glen was going to pitch."

"Were you ever lost?" asked Miss Pin, looking at him admiringly. "You are so big I suppose you just could not be *really* lost."

"Oh, yes, indeed. Everything that our Lit-

tle Boy or any other little boy has gets lost often. If it wasn't for nurses and mothers I don't know what we would all do to get ourselves found. Last night I dropped on the floor, and the puppy took me to bed with him, and if he had not been so sleepy I think he would have gnawed me to pulp—you can see the print of his teeth on my side here. Dogs ought to play with yarn balls, not with good base ones that have been in a League game. It is an insult to our achievements."

"If that red-headed Smith boy gets hold of you and makes you cheat to-morrow it will be worse than being gnawed by a curly-haired puppy dog," said Marble; and String and Professor Pencil agreed with him.

They were just beginning to discuss some plan to thwart the Smith boy in his unfair habits, when the flap of the pocket opened, and the Little Boy's hand pushed in a short joint of reed, and then the hand disappeared, leaving the reed behind.

"Goodness!" cried String, looking at the

newcomer, "were we not crowded enough already?"

But Professor Pencil reproved him for a lack of hospitality. "It is not the Reed's fault; he has to go where the Little Boy puts him. The trouble is that little boys don't have enough pockets; their mammas ought to make them more, then their treasures would not have to be so jammed and crammed."

"Our Little Boy's mamma says if he had fifty pockets he would find something to put in each of them," said Button. "I heard her the other night."

"Maybe that is true. But now let us introduce ourselves to the Reed and make it welcome," answered the Professor; and they all did as he bade them.

"I am sorry to intrude on you," the Reed said civilly, "but the gentleman over there is right—it is not my fault, for I have no power to resist the Boy's hand. I'll stick my head out of the top of the pocket, and so take up as little space as possible."

"I beg your pardon for my rude speech," said String. "Here, I'll twist up tighter and leave you more room. Wish you had come earlier; we have had such a pleasant time telling each other our origins and our experiences."

"What are you good for?" asked the Nail of the Reed, after everybody had spoken in welcome.

"The Little Boy says he is going to make a whistle of me, but I wish he had left me growing by the water with all my family; we had such merry times swinging in the wind."

"Have you ever been anywhere except down there by the water?" asked Miss Button.

"Nowhere; but I liked it there, for it was my home. The winds played with my thin green leaves, and the little marsh birds swung on my slender stem. I don't want to go out in the world and whistle tunes for a boy."

"You ought to be glad of a chance to travel and improve yourself," said Professor Pencil. "Suppose I had always stayed in the German

forest as part of a cedar tree, how little I would have known. I could not have written poetry or worked arithmetic. Education is a great thing, my friend."

The Reed started to answer, but just at that moment there was a great commotion. Everybody jostled everybody else. Marble got Miss Button in a corner and pounded her, Mr. Nail and the Professor bumped heads, and Captain Ball crowded all the others. And nobody could help it, for the Little Boy had tired of fishing and was running a race with the curly puppy. The String alone seemed undisturbed; no amount of jumping jarred him.

"Is this what you call traveling?" panted the Reed to Professor Pencil. "If so, I would rather stay at home and not be educated."

"Didn't the wind rock you as hard as this?" asked the Professor, but his words came in jerks because of the long skips the Little Boy was taking.

"Yes, it rocked me quite as hard; but then I had my roots to hold me fast, and hereI have

nothing; I'm just bobbing around loose. Oh, dear, I can't stand this; I'm half out of the pocket already—oh! oh!—good-by, everybody!" and he jolted over the edge of the pocket and was gone, falling among the wild flowers along the path.

"Good-by; glad I met you," cried the Professor after him. At which the String laughed, but the Professor never forgot his manners—which is a good thing in pencils and children too.

Faster and faster ran the Little Boy, and harder and harder bounced the band of travelers in the jacket pocket.

"Oh, this is worse than an automobile ride," cried poor Button, trying to wriggle away from Marble, and making matters worse by coming in contact with Ball, who tramped on her toes and bumped her head without at all wishing to do so.

"It is just like a cyclone and an earthquake combined," panted the Nail. "Things could

not have been any worse in San Francisco. The breath is nearly jolted out of me."

Then everybody grew silent and felt dizzy and scared, for there was a queer tearing sound at the side of the pocket, and Miss Pin cried in distress:

"The hole's tearing bigger—I don't believe I can hold on much longer! Oh, why doesn't he stop just a minute?"

"Oh, Pin, dear Pin, don't let us fall," sobbed Button in great fear.

"We'll do anything on earth for you, Miss Pin, if you will only hold on till the end of the race," said Ball.

"I'm doing—my best; but it's hard—so hard, with the pocket bobbing so—and—and you all—bumping about and pulling so——" said the Pin, talking in snatches because of the commotion.

"If you let go we will be lost—lost!" wailed Button. "Dear Pin, can't you—can't you spit on your hands? The Little Boy says he holds things tighter for doing that."

"You silly! Don't you see she can't spit on her hands without letting go?" cried String. "And then where would you be?"

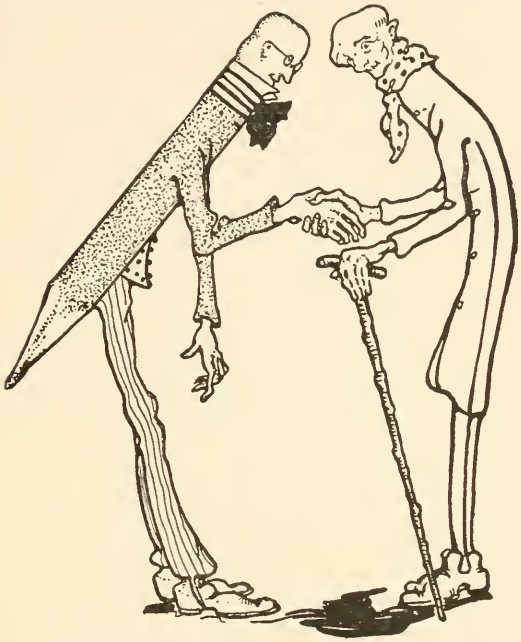
And poor little Pin kept crying: "Oh, the edges are tearing—and I'm working—farther—and—farther out."

"Oh, Captain Ball, can't you hit her on the head and push her back in?" pleaded Marble. But the Ball could not.

"My friends," said Professor Pencil solemnly, realizing the great danger they were in, "I fear the time is coming for us to part. We have been a very happy, contented company here in our Little Boy's pocket. I do not suppose we will ever meet again—all of us together, and so I wish you all good-by and good luck. Mr. Nail, you and I have had some disputes but no real quarrels; I hope your next owner will treat you well."

"Thank you very much, Professor. I wish you the same good fortune; but like you I think my end is not far off. The rust will soon eat me up. I do not suppose any other little

boy will care to carry me in his pocket. When I fall this time I shall be lost for good."



THE NAIL AND THE PENCIL

Then, while the Little Boy whistled to the curly puppy and ran faster and faster, they all began to say good-by.

"The Little Boy will miss us dreadfully,"

whimpered Marble. "When he finds we are all gone he'll be awfully sorry he didn't get that dreadful hole mended; but—but—it'll be—too late."

"He'll wish he had me back the first time he goes to spin his top," sighed String.

"He'll miss me more than all the rest of you, for now who will get the answers to those long, hard examples?" said the Professor mournfully.

A piece of the String was hanging out of the top of the pocket. "We are in the garden now; I can see the roses," he cried.

Just then Miss Button slipped through the edge of the hole that the Pin could no longer keep close, and with a clatter fell to the graveled garden walk.

"Good-by, dear little Button, take care of yourself," called the Nail. "I shall always remember you with pleasure."

"She fell right by the red rose bush," said String, hanging his head farther and farther out from under the pocket flap.

"Perhaps Nell will find her when she comes to gather roses for her teacher; let us hope so anyway," said the Professor. "Where are we now, String?"

"We are going out into the road again. Dear me, yonder come that red-headed Smith and another boy. It will be dreadful for any of us to fall now and be found by that bad boy."

"Miss Pin," cried the Professor eagerly but with great politeness, "I am sure you understand our feelings, and if you can save us until we get past the red-headed Smith boy we will be deeply grateful."

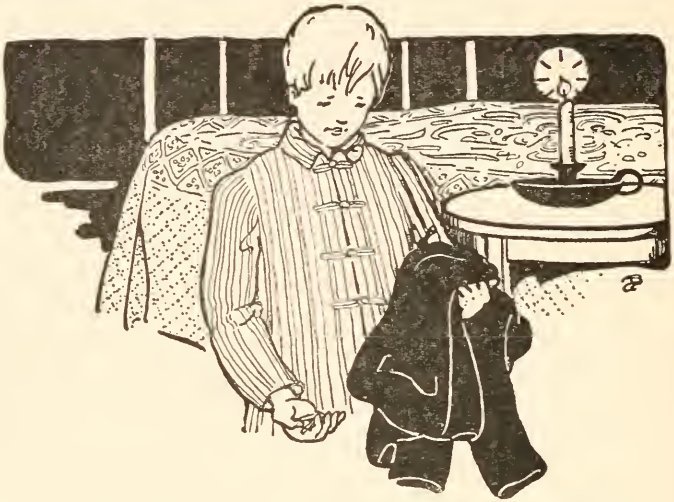
"I'll try—Pro—Professor," answered Pin, her teeth chattering with the jar of the Little Boy's swift steps.

"Just to think," said the Nail, "we were so happy here together, and now in a few hours we may all be serving different masters. Parting is certainly great sorrow."

"Yes," said Captain Ball sadly, "I had

hoped to stay with Professor Pencil until I had learned enough to graduate."

"Oh, Miss Pin, do please hold on until we



HE FOUND ONLY TWO OF THE TREASURES IN HIS POCKET

get to the porch; then he will hear us hit the floor and will pick us up. Why *will* little boys get holes in their pockets? and if they get them, why don't they tell their mammas?" sobbed Marble.

"I am trying to hold on—I've got another bend in my back, trying to keep these edges together, but—they are coming apart—I've—oh, I've *got* to let go!—I'm so sorry—good-by! good-by!" and brave but cross little Miss Pin gave up her hold and slipped away, leaving the hole wide open, and so was lost again.

After her, with a great push and thump, went Ball, taking a piece from the side of the pocket, and making the hole still bigger.

"See you later!" he called back to his companions; but they all knew they might never meet again.

"My time next," said the String, dangling far out of the pocket and unable to crawl back again. "I wonder who will find me. I certainly hope it will not be the red-headed Smith boy. I'd hate to tie up any more cats."

"Please don't mention him again—it makes me so nervous!" whispered Marble, trying to hold on to a place near the middle of the pocket, and wishing the Little Boy would re-

member the hole and stop running in time to save her.

But the curly dog kept racing along, and the Little Boy followed, and presently poor little Marble bounced so high that he went through the hole, and fell, crying bitterly, to the ground and rolled off to where a big leaf was propped up like a brown tent; and there he hid himself from the red-headed Smith boy, who was coming down the path.

The curly dog beat the Little Boy after all in the race to the house, for he had four feet and the Boy had only two; and ought not four to travel faster than two?

That night when the Little Boy took off his jacket to go to bed, he was very sorrowful, for he found only two of his treasures in the pocket —Mr. Nail was hanging by his head through a small hole he had worn in one corner with the constant rubbing while the race was going on; and scrouged close in the other corner was Professor Pencil, very proud and very happy that he had escaped, and was on hand to work

those hard examples, for without him how could the Little Boy ever get the right answers?

And besides the Nail and the Pencil, the only other thing left was the hole—and that is the very worst thing a little boy can ever have in his pocket.

THE END

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